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OUTPOSTS

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IN previous editorials we have remarked upon the difficulties experienced by new and unestablished poets in finding publishers willing to face what is, in these days of rising costs, almost certain to be a financial loss, for the sake of either poetry or prestige. The prices of paper, binding and printing, to say nothing of general overheads, are all increasing rapidly. We can understand the publisher's reluctance to take upon his shoulders extra burdens.

During recent months, however, a few enterprising publishers have attempted to meet the demands of the situation by producing poetry in booklet or pamphlet form. For instance, The Lotus Press are publishing a series called *The Acadine Poets* at 2/-. A review of the work of the ten *Key Poets* of Fore Publications is included in this issue. Now The Hand and Flower Press are developing the idea further with their *Poems in Pamphlet*. Each month during 1951 the selected work of one new poet will appear in a well-produced booklet of 32 pages at the price of 1/-. These booklets are designed in such a way that the whole series will comprise an "automatic anthology," for which a title-page and contents-list will be issued at the end of the year. We hope that these ventures will have the support they deserve.

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BRIAN MERRIKIN HILL

From Variations on the Eclipse of the Unicorn

I. Prelude: Passage beyond the Adult

BECAUSE the childhood soldiers on the floor,
bed feather plumed, fell down in rows to win
the lady's fortress by the cupboard door;

and since the pencilled story in the thin
green notebook had the satisfactory word
on the last page, this man is to begin

the passage back and forward in the absurd
real corridor whose clarity of light
dazzles with truth, from which, once he has heard

the flute-like voices from the windowed height
tell unmistakable fact, he must emerge
into day's darkness. In that brilliant night

he saw life first and clear, and now the urge
comes to explain to those who blindly see
unreal shapes dreamed true, who in the surge

of death's denial cry he cannot be.

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

Journey to Florence

WHERE, if at the end of plans and journeys
The dreamed-of city, now in brick and stone,
Exhaled in smoke, luminous with sunlight,
Spread beneath our windows and at hand
Is not the dream, where will it lie, that place
Built in our minds, of crystal and delight?
The irises and Arno, sliding like light
Beneath her bridges, arching like crests of horses?
The streets where, jostling, scarlet and lapis-blue

The crowds lean, watching Lorenzo and his court
Ride their white jennets, curvetting as if across
The silk-enamelled calm of tapestry,
Or Dante in the shadowy doorway pausing
To see the torrid bronze of Beatrice' hair.

Yet, though instead an idle river, clotted
By driftwood and mud kneads at ruins, lips
By refuse, and though bridges are broken, are falling,
And a crowd whose faces stare, whose bodies jostle
From work to house, from morning to the dark,
Too human, too habitual to love,
With only an alien tongue, or a flashing eye
To tell them from our neighbours, the uneasy
Multitude that shut us from ourselves,
The herald iris, stiff and pure as lapis
Blooms on the hills, and the rose sheds its leaves
One by one, like tears, as they fell and died
With Beatrice and fierce Lucretza lapped by the burning
Weight of her aureate and immortal hair.

TESSA SILLARS

Enigma of Innocence

(*Conceived by Picasso's "l'homme et l'agneau"*)

THIS man is full of God.
Like fountain jets in sunlit air
His goodness.
Through him the quiet of his morning hills
Shines whitely lit;
From its light, from bird-wing movements in the air,
From the whisper of a birth-bright moon,
Speak his prophetic voices,
And where he looks, he understands;
Behind his eyes
Is all desirable knowledge:
Eternal man in an antique world,
Before the strike of clocks
Had withered solitude.

There is such peace between
The creature and the man,
His touch is calm, accustomed;
He cannot refrain from this
Unthought tenderness,
Felt deeply in the heart, moving
Outwards from the wrist;
The curving palm, the informed fingertips,
Restrain the infant, ignorant limbs;
Their sprawl, the gawping mouth,
Are not yet ordered
To necessity of living.

In this shared innocence
The creature and the man
Are one with God.

JOSEPH JOEL KEITH

Child-Woman

WHEN the child-woman strolled
by day, by night,
the startled key of her fear
moved her,
top-like.

So, drawing away,
she moved from brightness,
through dimness,
near shadows—
choosing the black road's middle
where no fingers reached from the corners.

Behind her locked door
her hands were folded
across her locked self.

KATHLEEN NOTT

The Invisible Halcyon

IT seems you do not hear the ancient storm,
though it was lightning ripped the scene from darkness,
the wry skies and the helpless seas. And wide,
before they closed upon this brief white bliss,
our eyes were, wide as heaven, and our mouths rode
first invisible and then one, then lost. And love
was lost between us like a frantic bird.

It seems you cannot hear the ancient storm,
though its dumb voices crouch upon my heart
like souls for transit. Even the faithless and
weak flashes are but utilities which light
your downcast shadowed face to sleep and read
and make a chamber-silence as of darkness now
drawn safe on a legible world of steel striding.

How should you read the obscure and ancient storm?
Are we not new? Are we not wonderfully
together light and new? For if of older
kind, we should have time and words for these
poor dumb delayed, the voices. And if we were
less light, our passion would not thus be grave
nor our warm cheeks nestle the toppling-high.

I will not hear the ancient storm, for it
is in your heart and so forbidden music.
I must not know your heart, with all its former
windings, by yourself forgotten. I must not
be located, but be lost, within
the ancient storm, together light, as if,
unseen, your warm cheek were an halcyon.

GUSTAV DAVIDSON

Demons Are On My Side

DEMONS are on my side.
Against the assault of the self-righteous
they honor and defend me.

I am one with the dragon,
the chimera, the basilisk.
I look out of their eyes
and find the morning good.

Medusa, give me your head :
I would turn men to stone.
Saints and angels have perjured my days
too long;
I am bogged down in the mire of their beatitudes.

What has the serpent done to me
or the fox or the wild boar
that I should hunt and destroy him?
Show kindness to the lynx
and he will befriend you to the death.
Lions in their lair are nobler than redeemers.
I go to the panther for beauty and cunning.

From all who would do me good;
From all who seek to convert me to
their causes, persuasions;
From prophets, messiahs, martyrs—
preserve and deliver me.

The sun-storming phoenix;
The avenging furies;
The roc, devouring heaven—
these are my charioteers,
their wings my Icarian flight.

MADGE HALES

The Word

WHAT is this that crisps the ear to a bud
Gives light slanting from opaque eyes
And sets the tongue to words?

Stops the thorn print with silver
And shakes dust from the gathering years
Revealing their ultimate gold :

The serpent that hissed in the wood
Fled with the browning leaves and is dead
And the apple blossoms instead.

For the hands with the wounds caught mine
And trapped like sheep in a flood
My sins around me stood.

A sun shook the rocks from my eyes
Clearing a way through the wood of my sight
Till the bough tips stood as cathedrals stand :

The heeding blood on its fleshy way
Knew the precocious veins answered
Knew the hurt in the side flower in blood :

A pale voice heard in a dream set me awake
one voice silenced all others, one word
Fell over me, softer than snow on a hill.

GLYN JONES

Returning

AT the window is the shine of the large wet leaves.
I must go to father and son in their boat
as it heaves
Gently in the rain. I must speak before it leaves.

The young man at the stern with yellow hair
Sits silent in the dusk with his head and
hands bare.
Soon at the thin sea I shall be speaking
to him there.

Their lamp is lit. I must speak before night
comes on.
The last gull rises now from its ring upon
The heaving water, rises over the roof
and is gone.

I must leave the dim window. I must call
across the shore.
A shadow touches my feet over the darkening
floor;
The son is returning, the son has entered
at my open door.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

Dream Landscape

DEEP in the pleats of moorland lies
The farm house, cuffed half out of sight
By ash heaps, smoky as the skies,
And fluffed and furry, yellow and grey,
With silverweed and ragwort. White
Sift and cinder of seed from all
The upland umbelliferae
Fumes down on empty lath and wall
And blackberry-bundled railway lines
That squiggle about through byre and stall,
Where goutweed grows and grime-flakes fall,
And every rabbit and every rose
Holds a clinker to its nose.
And both of us are swimming there,
Armless and legless, like a pair
Of small dirigible balloons,
As through the hills we move : through bare
Buttocks of basalt cleft at where,
Between steep subway walls, a stair
Leads to the footsoar streets. And I,
Forgetting I'm naked, rush out and cry :
You with the whitewash on your sleeve,
Has Havering won again? But all
The pennies of all the slot machines
In hell and Egremont Crab Fair
Pour down about my ears, and leave
Brown stains of echoes on the stair.

RALPH GUSTAFSON

Gospel according to Guyon

NATURAL as rain and sunlight, limbs
Only joys perplex;
Tiger-lilies and cool
Euclid equal sex.

O when this is, how the globe will spin!
Gobi into park;
Coventry crowd its streets
And Tom be out of work;

Shells and acorns legends be
On oaks and golden sand;
Pools and mirrors smashed;
Pulpits Samarkand.

That papal Paul who put the pants
On Michelangelo
With roaring Paul of Tarsus
Shall hie to Jericho

While athletes tug the belfry ropes
And virgin cornettes rage:
Jock shall have his Jill
In that post-apple Age!

KENNETH GEE

Sutherland

(For Ishbelle Sutherland)

WHETHER within their sparse-leaved glens
Or by the intolerant sea,
Between assaulting water and old rock,
Sutherland men live at the world's edge.
Tumbled crofts in valleyed wildernesses,

Stones on a patch of violent green :
All that remains of living men then
And living beasts, a way of life,
Is stones and the colour of pure green
That shines like a suddenly opened flower
From the bald brown hills and grey rock.

Elsewhere enduring man has stayed,
A woman accepted a poor house
And the barren, too wide place,
Wearing for a hard country patient love :
Here is a house that is white and by itself.
The croft runs down to the seashore :
When the burning sunlight startles
On the heels of long grey rains,
Pebbles and foam design the beach,
And water blue as any south
And olive-bordered sea,
Brilliance of light and water then
Strike equal sparkle from the heart.

A flood of blue air rises, pours
Down white wall and fluid birch,
Frees the windy sea-rocked place
Where are no horizons that are homely,
That do not look too far—
Sutherland men will not be bound,
Though their land is derelict land.

The landscape wears a mask
For anglers in hotels, returned
To fires of peat in cosy rooms.
In at the long glass window stare
The desperate eyes of hill or rock :
Whether the mask is sad or gay
Does not depend on hard or easy weather.

It is hard to snare in mind or eye
The truth of this country that may seem
To have no mercy, and nothing to do
With the human heart and its desires.
Here, in whatever doorway men may stand,
Loneliness looking from indoors out
Is met by loneliness looking in.

CHARLES DURANTY

Return

IN the hills where my childhood lingers
echo sleeps with echo
and I return a stranger to thorn bush
and waterfall; the ghost squatting
in the weathered cave,
ponders rabbit-skull and bramble,
offering no eye of recognition
for I am come back,
without authority, to old situations.

The town below the hills
once built my bones; upon the rock
was built the church.
Faith of the rock raise up the bone
for darkness is reality
and darkness is upon the waters;
I am come back,
the voice from the wilderness,
I am come back
unfamiliar, unloved,
with the dark message of alien water.

Footsteps disturb the dancers;
I am a stranger to my people
without honour and full of years.

House and street conspire against me,
the seasons have piled up their witnesses
and the judges are my own generation.

The handshake is mere formality
for we see only what we are meant to see
and birth and death are often accidental;
in passage and hallway,
on newel-post and lintel,
change is remote, imperceptible,
the beetle and untiring worm
bring down the stoutest timbers.

By the unmade fire in the unswept room
I sit with my fears about me
and faces without pity
look in from the neglected garden.

BURNS SINGER

The Hill of Names

(for W. S. Graham)

MEN write upon the sea with all their lives,
Each catch of the breath caught up in its stinging hives
And honeyed over in cells,
Turned lonely as no man tells
But the creeping kettledrums cry and the cradle-white horses,
Nosebagged in clouds, stampe to its hole resources.

There the square cliffs build up white walls against
That drowned man jewelled in sobs, so savagely cleansed
That a mouthful of salt bread,
A blanket and rocky bed,
Define him better than utterance blazoned and skilled
In the rounded mouth, now good and bad are fulfilled.

Better a power of speech on the Great Bite coral's
Decrepit prodigies than mankind's quarrels,
Better a step in the strides
Of broken and bellowing tides
Where a gay bully's astraddle storm-gathered flanks
And his heart belongs to a hussy blindfolded on planks.

They are a couple will dance in the ears of churches,
Bother and bite in the chaste young air of voyages,
Tumble and tug to the tunes
Of widowed tears and swoons.
They'll make men mad, blow bubbles out of lungs,
And speak their spite like snakes with double tongues.

Sometimes the sea too crystals like a hand
Opened by wrinkled valour till time stands
 Beetling to tell its ills
 Now ironed out and stilled,
Foretold by ritual cunningly one night,
The moon like a burnt offering of light.

Men in the kindling candletime of salt's
Dark choirs or schools of brightness under locked vaults,
 Engrave their rote of names
 On hills of wet white flames,
And all out pity is a bag of tricks
To filch that flame, their bones our sparking sticks.

The hill of names no one name ever wrote
Tumbles for worship of another note.
 We see it buoyed for praise
 Across the field of days.
We build it with our blood but feel it rise
Through colder depths we cannot realise.

Men write upon the sea but even more
The sea in them makes music to the core.
 Out of the hill of names
 A wintered derelict comes
On heels of ice with shredded voice that calls
Children from stems of salt and hands from walls.

He fills his head with breezes pointing north
And he is proud in homage to his worth.
 He has been given eyes
 And made them deep with surprise.
And all the laden waves give up his name
Into the blood and warfare whence it came.

Let sad devotions nor no casement choir
Trouble him now. Let the lucky catch fire,
 Trade tinder particles
 With these new flaming seas
Until time's axles melt and mankind turns
Into a temple round corners where everything burns.

REVIEWS

Woman to Man: Judith Wright (Angus & Robertson, 7s. 6d.).

The Crown and The Fable: Hugo Manning (Gaberbochus Press, 6s.).

Job: H. Van Wagenvoorde (Fortune Press, 6s.).

The Darkling Plain: John Heath-Stubbs (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 10s. 6d.).

JUDITH WRIGHT'S poems are as unmistakably feminine as the poems of Kathleen Raine, Marianne Moore, Anne Ridler and all the other women poets writing today and all the women poets who have ever achieved publication. Perhaps one day a courageous critic will attempt to analyse their works and to put forward reasons why women poets can maintain such a consistently high standard of poetry yet always fail to reach the ultimate heights of greatness. Miss Wright's poems are very good indeed and of an almost monotonously efficient appositeness of form and content. She is, without doubt, Australia's most important younger poet and her next book of poems will be anticipated with eagerness by at least one critic.

When writing of Hugo Manning's previous volume I suggested that he was capable of some considerable poetry. Unfortunately, his second book does not suggest that he has yet attained to that degree of competence. There are still the occasional slick verbal tricks which threaten to become a habit and there is still the tendency to indulge in platitudinous philosophizing to the detriment of the poetry. It would appear that the praise Mr. Manning received for his earlier work had the opposite result from that undoubtedly intended by his critics. Instead of proceeding from his achievements he has remained wedded to them. In *The Crown and The Fable* Mr. Manning has made no advance on his previous work and that is a great pity; without progress the poetry will perish. Kenneth Patchen is an interesting poet but he is not a good model and Mr. Manning would do well to give his work a miss in the future.

At this time, when it is so difficult for new poets to find a publisher they have a duty to themselves and to their prospective readers and to bolster up a slim volume of indifferent verse with a lengthy essay on *Poetry and Existentialism* is not very helpful. It is presumably in order to assist in the better understanding of Mr. Van Wagenvoorde's verse, but this is neither more nor less existentialist in expression than most of the verse published recently, the

essay appears to be superfluous. There is promise of greater things in those poems where Mr. Van Wagenvoorde does not attempt too much. There is no promise at all in the use of rhymes like "stewed/fluid," "fruit/druid." A ruthless pruning fork should have been applied to this collection before publication, even if that had resulted in a delay of a few years in order to achieve a moderate degree of competence.

So much has been written of Mr. Heath-Stubbs' volume of criticism, *The Darkling Plain*, and it has been awarded such high marks by the majority of critics, that I can serve no useful purpose by repeating their commendations. It is an extremely useful study of later romanticism in poetry up to W. B. Yeats, suffering only from an occasional brevity of comment. There is sufficient material for a volume twice the size and it is to be hoped that the author will expand, at a later date, on the relevance to his theme of those poets inadequately dealt with in the present book. Doughty, for instance, and Dixon and, of course, Yeats himself. I suspect that Mr. Heath-Stubbs has under-rated Edward Thomas and has been hardly fair to Swinburne. Also that he over-rates Tennyson's brother, Tennyson Turner, who surely does not merit nearly thirty lines of quotation in a book so full of undeveloped themes. Quotations in such a book are, admittedly, a matter of personal selection; yet I am not sure that the author has not over-quoted in very many instances. In a book written with less sincerity and competence this fault would take on the appearance of padding.

B. EVAN OWEN.

The Rent That's Due To Love: an anthology of Welsh Poetry, translated, with a Foreword, by Gwyn Williams (Editions Poetry London, 7s. 6d.).

Poems 1938-1949: Robert Lowell (Faber & Faber, 9s. 6d.).

Mountains Beneath The Horizon: Poems by William Bell. Edited with an introduction by John Heath-Stubbs (Faber, 8s. 6d.).

Sappho (a play in verse): Lawrence Durrell (Faber, 10s. 6d.).

PROFESSOR WILLIAMS'S translations from Welsh poetry make one of the most fascinating books published in recent months. Not only is there the freshness of excellent verse revealed to ignorant non-Welshmen, there are also remarkable depths of feeling, lightness yet sureness of expression in complicated forms and rhythms, a body of verse of which all modern Welsh poets must be aware (and in which modern English poets can read with advantage), discussion of the derivation of Hopkins's Sprung Rhythm (read *I Hyfaul Riain* by Huw Morus, a 17th-century

poet, beautifully translated here), and a real delight unknown in verse written during the Age of Anxiety. More of this excellent verse must be made known to the Saesneg, and in future enlargements may the publishers improve on the poor school-book binding which disfigures this collection?

Turning from the old to the new, it would be easy to drop into condemnation of the miserable struggles of the time: yet there is strength and keenness and a striving for delight even for those living on the Edge of Being. Robert Lowell is an embodiment of the predominance of the United States: he is aware of the history of the populated earth, of Greece and Rome and Europe and his own country. He uses a line and a form which are traditional with variations, and he cannot *evoke* without Names. Every page is embroidered with Capital Letters—Jesus, Captain Ahab, Poland, Walsingham, Napoleon, Satan, Winslow, bits of Latin, crucifixes, Cape Cod, King's Chapel, Bathsheba, *Cherry ripe*—the rag-bag, the box of coloured counters, a whole world of literature and history is mocked up like a charade. The verse sparkles, even dazzles, yet there is always the feeling that (like Mr. Eliot) Mr. Lowell is playing the familiar Yankee Romantic, the innocent abroad.

The work of the late William Bell (1924-48), chosen here by John Heath-Stubbs and therefore edited to make the best possible show, is unmistakably English—as English as Julian Grenfell with the feeling (without the verbal restraint) of A. E. Housman, with a touch of Gavin Ewart and some of the slick vigour of Louis MacNeice. He, too, likes Capital Letters; and the mountains which caused his far too early death. *The Elegies, Bach Improvising at The Organ*, and other pieces with classical backgrounds, are very well made; and there is much to be said at times for a bit of rhetorical rant. How many forefathers can be assumed from this stanza from *The Chief Stoker's Song*?

"A blowsy bitch is History
who will not let her friends forget her :
what's she ever done for me?
Turning out is still a curse,
nothing changes for the better
and the beer is getting worse."

The more variety in modern poetic drama, the better. The hard work of the last twenty years has put Mr. Eliot and Mr. Fry into very influential positions, but in spite of the high seriousness of the one and the brilliance of the other, common-sense is lacking, and with it a feeling of foot-on-the-ground, melodrama, and unham-

pered vision. With the publication of Ronald Duncan's *Stratton* and now of Lawrence Durrell's *Sappho*, two further distinct poetic minds are thinking of the stage and widening the horizons. Auden, Isherwood, Spender, Nicholson, Ridler, Eliot, Fry, Duncan, Durrell—is there even yet the right condition for a paramount poet of the theatre? Durrell has made a very genuine attempt and his verse is keen and clean, a good instrument. He admits that *Sappho* is too long, and would abolish Diomedes. As the play stands, Diomedes is a more interesting character than Sappho.

"Calm me. Calm me. No, do not kiss me. Talk to me."
Are we already beginning to miss Shaw? "Talk to me," and talk in verse.
HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

Veld Patriarch: Francis Carey Slater (Longmans, 8s. 6d.).

Moment of Visitation: Gustav Davidson (Alan Swallow, U.S.A., \$2.50).

The Fire's Center: Henry Goddard Leach (Fine Editions, U.S.A., \$2.75).

Collected Poems: John Black (Fine Editions, U.S.A., \$3).

Bronze Frieze: N. H. Brettell (O.U.P. 6s.).

IN HIS *Veld Patriarch*, Dr. Francis Carey Slater has collected all the poems he wishes to retain in addition to those included in his *Selected Poems* (published in 1949), but in this category are a number of lyrics which have not appeared in print before. The poems in his previous volume were selected by Edmund Blunden and it is curious to note the change of stress in this latter collection. It is not that the standard is higher, for the *Selected Poems* must be one of the finest books of poetry which have been written in South Africa, but that another of Dr. Slater's poetic qualities, his Wordsworthian vision, is more readily apparent. It is particularly in evidence in the title poem, and in such reflective pieces as *The Kloof*:

"Then with new eyes I beheld the rise of the sun and
its setting . . .
Saw in the streams on the mountain the motion of
galloping horses—
Waterfalls spreading white manes and silver tails
to the wind!
Saw in the shapes of the trees and the curves of the
sky-seeking mountains,
Signs and wonders and symbols writ on the scroll of
the earth."

Yet the vision is unquestionably his own and, one might say, South African. He has a profound respect for his country, which gives his work a distinction and a virility not often found in poetry today. For poems of action, for a poetic interpretation of South African history, the reader should turn to his selection from the magnificent sequence, *The Trek*. This volume maintains Dr. Slater's reputation.

The work of Mr. Gustav Davidson, an American poet, relies less upon the indigenous element; it is that of a poet who has travelled widely in both the world of imagination and the more casual world of fact, and maintained a balanced state of emotion. Every experience has been carefully assimilated and classified. If these poems are not so rich and colourful as Dr. Slater's, they have an intellectual power which penetrates to the heart of his subject and more than compensates for any lack of descriptive vigour. His short, austere lines possess a sculptural firmness, but occasionally fail to justify their title of "Lyrics," and his ideas are communicated with admirable clarity:

"Singly or massed their bodies
in slow somnambular paces
probe the elliptical trap of time
with unseeing eyes and faces."

A telling sense of humour gives edge to such poems as *Cynics' Corner*.

Of the other American poets, Mr. Henry Goddard Leach is least assuming. His verse is calm and unpretentious. The simplicity of its form is refreshing, though a little vapid and sprinkled with clichés. Mr. John Black's work is ambitious, but seldom successful. Many of his lines are piecemeal, as in *Marjorie Black*, and their effect is to emphasize the obvious and weaken the impact of his better poems.

Although Mr. N. H. Brettell is a Rhodesian, reading his book one loses all sense of place and finds a universal voice. He can be pleasingly satirical, yet his outlook tends to be somewhat negative. In his lyrical mood, however, he commands a wide range of subject and displays an individual manner of communication.

FRANCIS CABUCHE.

Key Poets: Ten booklets by various authors (Fore Publications, 1s. each).

THE most distinguished of the ten poets represented in this series is undoubtedly Dr. Edith Sitwell. Her *Poor Men's Music*, with the long lines, the glowing or sombre imagery, and the lament

for the sufferings of mankind, characteristic of her recent manner, can leave no doubt at all that with Dr. Sitwell we are in the presence of a major poetic figure. Another well-known poet is Mr. George Barker, whose *True Confession of George Barker* is a most interesting, if, typically, most uneven autobiography, written in astonishingly adroit verse. The poet appears as an extremely unhappy man, condemned by his manichaeic view of the world to languish in the prison of the flesh. In the course of his meditations we move from passages of the most appalling grossness and vulgarity, up through coruscating satire on marriage and other social problems, to lines which are as lovely as anything in modern poetry. The puns are, inevitably, here in force, but this time, in a satirical context, they come off a good deal better than in Mr. Barker's purely lyrical poems. The poems of Mr. Randall Swingler, a quieter and more unobtrusive poet, in *The God in the Cave* are intellectual but not over-cerebral, and suggest the explorations of a thoughtful and troubled mind in its search for a pattern of significance in the contemporary world. Mr. Norman Cameron is another quiet but accomplished figure. His *Forgive Me, Sire* contains some very felicitous writing; urban and controlled poems, written with effective understatement, that stay in the mind a long time. *Twinter's Wedding*, by the late Jonathan Denwood, is a long narrative poem in the Cumbrian dialect, a record of a lusty Northern marriage-feast. Even those who have to overcome (as I do) a certain slight antipathy to dialect verse should enjoy reading this vigorous and lively poem—which affords, by the way, a distinct contrast to the somewhat cloistered world of much contemporary poetry.

Of the other five poets in this series, Mr. Maurice Carpenter's *Gentle Exercise*, with its slight, rather literary poems, is pleasing, though scarcely more; Mr. Jack Lindsay in *Three Letters to Nikolai Tikhonov* shows, here and there, genuine lyrical feeling, but wantonly smothers most of it with remarkably inept versifying of Stalinist propaganda; while the poems in Mr. Stanley Snaith's *The Common Festival* are certainly well written, but appear pedestrian in tone and content. Finally, Mr. Dorian Cooke's *Fugue For Our Time*, which contrives to be both lugubrious and, in places, incomprehensible, makes tedious reading; as does Mr. Jack Beeching's *Aspects of Love*, a fragmentary account of erotic disintegration, that commits the all too common error of presenting a naked experience instead of the poetry resulting from that experience.

The idea of presenting these booklets is an excellent one, for they

have a most attractive format, are printed on good paper, and are inexpensive. It is, therefore, the more unfortunate that the series should be of such uneven poetic quality. Perhaps the publishers can remedy this in any future series they might issue.

BERNARD BERGONZI.

The Swarming of the Bees: John Heath-Stubbs (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 7s. 6d.).

The Glassblowers: Mervyn Peake (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 7s. 6d.).

Recollections of the Gala: Nicholas Moore (Poetry London, 7s. 6d.).

WHEN a publisher produces two books of identical format—40 pages of text at 7s. 6d.—one cannot help comparing the two poets concerned in an effort to see why they were balanced against each other. Mervyn Peake has a separate reputation as an artist and John Heath-Stubbs is above all a poet's poet. *The Swarming of the Bees* shows him, as in other books, more interested in the landscape and figures of the past than in his immediate surroundings. He is not an escapist, but primarily an academic, a scholar with a deep capacity for visual enjoyment. The beauty of landscape and architecture is obviously increased by the romantic colouring of Greek legend, early Christian hagiology and the Milton-Keats tradition of language. There are many lovely and memorable lines, and a feeling for dramatic situations which save the poems from becoming music-drugs—

“But Mark, the lion, came roaring out of Galilee”

or “Thrust back by hands of air from the sanctuary door,
Mary of Egypt, that hot whore,
Fell on the threshold-stone.”

The monologue of Iphigenia in Tauris reveals a sensitive understanding of another's mind, and is all the more interesting since Iphigenia has been written about by innumerable poets, ever since the Greek tragedians. Along with *Maria Aegyptiaca* and *Alexandria* it is the most memorable poem in the book. Mr. Heath-Stubbs has a perfectly assured technique for blank verse, sonnets and many stanza forms; he lacks only some element of living emotion. Nostalgia and dramatic monologues are not enough, and at the moment his poems are too dangerously beautiful—music and colour are spilling out of them almost too fast. Neither violent nor desiccated emotion would fuse well with his lyricism, learning and

humour, but some firmer element is needed to give his work vitality.

The immediate difference felt in Mervyn Peake's poems is that the people in them move, and not always gracefully. They are even violent, and violent things happen—"Swans die and a tower falls," "My arms are rivers heavy with raw flood. And their white reaches cry though flesh be dumb." Nothing could be further than the reflective, carefully finished poems of John Heath-Stubbs. Words have a different meaning, and people a different life. The magnificent fantasy of Peake's drawings is recalled in lines such as "His body smouldering with long diamonds Of silver, yellow, and of sea-green fire," and the title-poem *The Glassblowers* is like a huge, rough choreographic sketch full of moving light and half-understood magic. It gives some idea of the vast poetic richness in industry which very few writers have even thought about, not even the realistic novelists.

Unexpectedly there are several neat, almost epigrammatic poems in the collection, and it is obvious that the total range of Mr. Peake's capabilities has hardly yet been realised. He is an exciting poet, giving pleasure less easily than John Heath-Stubbs, but more deeply. The publishers were wise to produce two such complementary books at the same time: they gain by being read together.

You must like your drinks dry to enjoy Nicholas Moore's work, and you must share to some extent in his after-the-gala hangover. He is a sophisticated writer in every sense, with a saving hint of bats in his hair. His latest book—his first for six years—contains a wide range of work, reflecting all sides of his talent. He is a stimulating poet with a brilliant satiric touch which sweeps away all the pompous writing and reviewing that hems us in today. He speaks in caricature symbols to give the brush-off to all the poor frustrated fools littered about the earth—but he can also speak with frightening personal bitterness and truth in *Nostalgia*, *Variation on an Old Theme* and many others. *Echo from an Athenian Night* is lyrical, softer in tone than most of the book, and there are even poems to be recited at parties during the last round of gin—I love you in July, honey, I love you in the park—with easy rhythms and sad endings. I enjoyed every page of this book, even when getting annoyed at an obscurity or what seemed a careless ending. But there is nothing careless about Mr. Moore. You may not discover that until you have read the poems three times at least, and a library copy is not good enough—you will have to buy it.

MARGARET CROSLAND.